

Chapter I

A Marvellous Method

The Supernormal Eightfold Way

The Buddha had spoken of two ways of helping a blind man cross the road. One method is to hold his hand and guide the way. In such a case the blind man does not know where we are taking him. He must have blind faith in us. The other method is that of a surgeon who performs an operation on the blind man's eye to make him see for himself. This way the **blind faith** is eliminated. The Buddha declared that his method of teaching meditation is similar to the method of the surgeon. This is why the teaching of the Buddha is not based on blind faith but on clear comprehension. This marvellous method of the Buddha has eight steps. It is called the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**, commonly translated as the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the method we follow. It is called **supernormal** because the aim of the Buddha was not to get people to believe in him blindly and obey him, but his aim was to transform normal people with worries and anxieties to a supernormal level of happiness. This aim of the Buddha is the counterpart of the modern psychotherapist's aim, which is to bring abnormal suffering to a normal level of unhappiness. How The Buddha's **supernormal aim** is realized, however, will be made clear in due course, because that is the main purpose of this booklet.

Enlightenment first or last?

An important question that arises at this point is: whether enlightenment arises after meditation, or whether one should be enlightened before the meditation. This seems to be

a question that arose in the mind of *Acariya Buddhagosa* when beginning to write the *Visuddhi Magga*. Obviously, he thought that knowledge came after meditation. This was why he saw the path as *sīla-samādhi-paññā*, which he saw as starting with **control of behaviour**, followed by **concentration of mind**, and ending up in gaining **insight**.

He even quoted the words of the Buddha, in support of this position:

The enlightened human, being disciplined

– *Sīle patiṭṭhāya naro sapañño*

Develops the mood and intellect

– *Cittaṇ paññānca bhavayaṇ*

This tranquil intelligent mendicant

– *tāpi nipako bhikkhu*

He does solve this problem

– *So imaṇ vijaṭaye jataṇ*

The three level way is not the path

Unfortunately, he misunderstood the quotation. He seems to have ignored the statement: “**Enlightened human, being disciplined**” (*sīle patiṭṭhāya naro sapañño*). (*naro sapañño* = the enlightened human). The fact that **enlightenment precedes discipline** is further supported in the *culla vedalla sutta*, although it is often misinterpreted even there. In other words, the path is the **Supernormal Eightfold Way** and not the **three levels** (*sīla, samādhi, and paññā*). This means the control of behaviour (*sīla*) has to be based on an understanding of the reason for control, as indicated by the precedence of the **Harmonious Perspective** (*sammā diṭṭhi*). This is why **The Supernormal Eightfold Way** (*Ariya Aṭṭhangika Magga*) begins

with the **Harmonious Perspective** (*sammā diṭṭhi*) followed by the **Harmonious Orientation** (*sammā sankappa*) before getting into the discipline of behaviour, which is: **Harmonious Speech** (*sammā vācā*), **Harmonious Action** (*sammā kammanta*) and **Harmonious Life Style** (*sammā ājīva*). This means, this control of behaviour (*sīla*) is not something to be done on blind faith. If it is done on blind faith, it becomes a **heteronomous morality** (*sīlabbata parāmāsa*), which is a **morality** subject to **external impositions**. What is needed here is **supernormal morality** (*ariya sīla*), which is an **autonomous morality** based on personal conviction and a quietist and benevolent orientation (*aparāmaṭṭha samādhi sanvattanikaṇ*).

The Harmonious Perspective

The first step, therefore, on this extraordinary path is the **Harmonious Perspective**, commonly translated as **Right View**, or **Right Understanding**. In other words, we start by **explaining** to the follower what **the problem** is, the **cause of the problem**, and the **solution to the problem**. In other words, we explain **what** should be done, **why** it should be done, and **how** it should be done. This means **we explain**, so no one can **complain**. In other words, this is not a “monkey see, monkey do” method. We speak to intelligent people who want to understand what they are doing, and why they are doing it.

Only way to emancipation

In the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, that deals with the last days of the Buddha, we learn of a person called Subhadda who came to the Buddha and asked, “Are there emancipated spiritual men in other religious sects in the world?”

The Buddha replied, “I do not wish to talk about other religious sects. I will speak only about the views of my own religious sect. As long as the **Supernormal Eightfold Way** is practiced, the world would not be devoid of emancipated spiritual men.”

This clearly indicates that if we want to be **spiritually emancipated**, or to **solve the problem of existence**, or **be freed from the insecurity of life**, the path to be followed is the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**. This is why the method of meditation discussed in this booklet is based on this **Supernormal Eightfold Way** (*ariya aṭṭhangika magga*), as practised and taught by the Buddha in the Sutta Pitaka. It is not based on the **Visuddhi Magga**, the famous book on meditation, written by the well-known author Buddhaghosha. This **Supernormal Eightfold Way** is as follows:

- (1) Harmonious Perspective (*Sammā Diṭṭhi*)
- (2) Harmonious Orientation (*Sammā Sankappa*)
- (3) Harmonious Speech (*Sammā Vācā*)
- (4) Harmonious Action (*Sammā Kammanta*)
- (5) Harmonious Life Style (*Sammā Ājīva*)
- (6) Harmonious Exercise (*Sammā Vāyāma*)
- (7) Harmonious Attention (*Sammā Sati*)
- (8) Harmonious Equilibrium (*Sammā Samādhi*).

This Supernormal Eightfold Way has been explained in more detail in the first and second books on meditation published by us. The reader is encouraged to read them for further clarification.